



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY TO EXPORT LASER SIGHTS USED FOR M-16 ASSAULT RIFLES AND OTHER WEAPONS

PHILADELPHIA – Patrick L. Meehan, the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, and William Reid, the Special Agent-in-Charge for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Philadelphia, announced that Sotaro Inami pleaded guilty late yesterday in U.S. District Court to one count of conspiracy to violate the Arms Export Control Act, in violation of Title 18 USC, Section 371.

The guilty plea by Inami, a 30-year-old resident of Tokyo, arose from his conspiracy to export infrared target pointer/illuminating lasers (Model AN/PEQ2a) that are specifically configured for military application. These lasers, which are used by the U.S. military for the M-16 rifle and other weapons, are classified as U.S. Munitions and require a State Department license for export. Inami conspired to illegally export these systems from the United States without a license.

The guilty plea comes after an investigation by special agents from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS).

“The export of U.S. military laser sights is controlled for good reason – in the wrong hands, these sophisticated items pose a threat to American troops overseas. Keeping sensitive U.S. weapons technology from falling into the hands of our adversaries is a top priority for ICE and the Department of Homeland Security,” said ICE Special Agent-in-Charge Reid.

The investigation into Inami and a co-conspirator began in August 2003 when ICE agents learned that the defendants were attempting to purchase and illegally export military laser systems from the United States. Over the next several months, the defendants negotiated the terms of a deal with U.S. suppliers.

In phone calls monitored by agents, Inami stated that he knew military laser sights could not be exported from the United States without a license, according to court documents. He added that he had previously exported U.S. military items out of the country without a license. Inami noted that he intended to have his shippers label the military lasers as “optical devices” so they would not arouse suspicion by authorities.

In January 2004, ICE agents learned than Inami was planning to come to the United States to pick up five military laser sights and to attend a weapons show in Las Vegas, Nevada. ICE agents from Philadelphia flew to Los Angeles and arrested Inami at the airport on February 17, 2004. In his backpack, agents found wire transfer receipts and brochures on military laser sights.

On July 27, 2004, a federal grand jury in Philadelphia indicted Inami and a co-conspirator on one count of conspiracy to violate the Arms Export Control Act. By statute, violating the Arms Export Control Act provides for a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment, a \$1 million fine, three years of supervised release, and a \$100 special assessment.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Wendy Kelly is prosecuting the case.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.